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Subject: This Life Completed in the Life to Come.

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THIS LIFE COMPLETED IN THE LIFE TO COME.

“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”—
Heb. xiii. 14.

We are not to suppose that ours is the era of great cities, as compared with earlier periods. City-building, in some respects, was more remarkable in antiquity than it is now. With us, the building of cities follows private enterprise. It follows some law, whatever it may be, within itself. There was a time when a sovereign so owned his people, and the wealth of the whole region, that he could build as he pleased. A unity of power and design and unexampled richness enabled the city-builder of antiquity to do even more than the freedom of modern enterprise achieves in our day. The Egyptian cities were, according to the best accounts, full memorable; and the Babylonian and Assyrian cities yet, in their ruins, attest their magnitude and magnificence. The whole country east of the Jordan, in the time of Christ, was alive with cities. Galilee was so populous that Josephus says there were some fifteen hundred cities, with over ten thousand inhabitants a piece; and modern research is showing that ruin touches ruin all over that land. In Eschalon there are still the memorials of Greek and Roman achievement in the building of cities; and farther to the southeast some most extraordinary cities are standing to-day in the wilderness as perfect as they did in the hour when the hammer ceased to sound on them,—the doors of stone turning as if they had never turned before, and the silent streets and empty houses being absolutely void, and for centuries without a history, the very knowledge of who built them and held them being lost.

Cities, then, so far from being a product of this later day, belong rather to antiquity than to modern times.

To the Jews, a city had a significance which it scarcely had to

any other. You know how anxiously their own history was impressed upon their mind and their imagination, and how it was the design of God to develop in them, through patriotism, the religious feeling. And so every element of their history was celebrated—the experiences of the fathers; their going down into Egypt; their captivity; and their wanderings in the wilderness. It was during the long period of these wanderings, when they dwelt in camps and tents, that *city* had a special meaning in the ear of the Jews—particularly when Jerusalem became in good earnest a city, and the temple had been built, so that the altar was no longer kept in a tabernacle. Round about the temple, on mighty rock-hills, the city itself was established, and was walled in; and when its palaces multiplied, then Jerusalem became glorious; and the Psalmist's and the prophets' writings are full of celebrations over the great city of God—Jerusalem.

But strong and glorious as it was, after all, it was not a real refuge. The very city of Jerusalem that, as compared with the wandering camps and tents of skins or of canvas, seemed to be a marvel of permanence, might be a shelter and defense from the minor evils of life, such as the aggression of armies, the inroads of oppressors, the assaults of outward enemies of every kind; but what help could it furnish for those unavoidable evils which, after all, bring into life more suffering than the armed hand—care, fear, remorse, disappointment, bereavement—those mischiefs which lift no banner, and sound no trumpet, which move by day and by night, and invade all cities and all dwellings. Old Jerusalem could not deliver nor be a refuge from these enemies, which eat the heart and core out of life more than ever it is crushed out by oppression.

When famine and death came; when the cradle and the couch were desolated; when child, parent, companion and fellow-laborer were taken away, then there was no refuge in Jerusalem. It afforded no protection against such adversaries. The ten thousand burdens of life, all the things which mainly beat upon humanity and afflict it—there was no release in the city from these.

The language of the text is not full of despondency and sadness: it is courageous; it is hopeful. The course of thought is remarkable for its unconscious ingenuity. It exhorts men to be established through grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. It says:

“It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace: not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”

Be religious, not by mere form and ceremony, but by actual experiences of the soul.

That naturally reminded him of the sacrifices that were offered on the altar ; and he spiritualized them :

"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle [the Jews who do not accept Christ]."

And then, while speaking of the altar, one of the facts connected with sacrifices comes to his mind :

"For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for sin, are burned without the camp."

And that suggests the fact that Christ suffered outside of the city of Jerusalem :

"Wherefore, Jesus, also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Leave the city ; give up the refuge and the stronghold ; follow that man who was a malefactor in the eye of the law ; go off to the camp with him.

"For here have we no continuing city ; but we seek one to come."

Give yourself to your religious faith—to that faith which once carried with it ostracism and reproach ; to that faith which blocked up the ways of life ; to that faith which made patriotism itself a torment and a burden. Go boldly out after Jesus, no matter if you abandon old Jerusalem. You have no continuing city here. This is good for a while, but there is something better. We seek a city—another and better one. An invisible and superior life was held out as a cheer and a comfort amid the infelicities, the infidelities, the sufferings and the duties of this lower mortal life.

There is in the Bible no formal consecutive statement of the uses of this life. Its duties are continually pointed out to us ; the motives to right conduct are sharpened and pressed home upon us ; but there is no philosophical statement in the Bible, anywhere, of the full design and purpose of this mortal life. Why were men born into the world ? Why were they put into such circumstances and such relations ? What need was there that men who are to be gathered home to heaven should start so far away, and on a road so rugged, so precipitous and so dangerous. Nothing is told us on these points. Nor are our relations with the other life stated with such philosophical definiteness as that with which we to-day are attempting to state them. Scattered here and there are glimpses, hints, partial statements ; and from these, illustrated by our experience, we derive no inconsiderable knowledge—at any rate, approximations toward knowledge—of the relations which this life sustains to the other.

That this life is a stage on which to develop the human soul is

scarcely to be doubted. All our good things are evolved from the conditions of human life. The evolution of faculty into conduct and into character; the fixing of principles in a man's life, so that they become powers in him,—these things are accomplished by the schooling of life itself. No man inherits activity, enterprise, foresight, justice, benevolence, the finer feelings. They are developed in him by training; and it is a training for which this world is specially adapted. It is a good grinding world. It is a good sharpening world. It is a good stimulating world. It is not a restful world altogether. It is a world that wakes men up, and by ten thousand necessities on every side compels them to think, and to think far ahead; to forbear, and to deny themselves; to restrain self-indulgence; to consider others as well as themselves; to combine thoughts, and to systematize them. It is a world which is educating men into practical philosophy and economy. The world, by its very necessities, engenders in men these various traits; and it is fair, since it does so universally, to say that it was designed to do so.

At a later stage, these qualities in parents become transmissible; and yet, not the less are they educated by the relations sustained to daily duty in practical life. No matter with what endowment or genius in morals or æsthetics a man comes into life, no man is so endowed that he is not obliged to feel the pressure of the great round world upon him. Religious institutions can never do the work of the economic and social institutions of society. Religion does its work. It holds up a higher ideal than would naturally be engendered in life. It also discloses to us the relations of present virtue or vice to future consequences. But above all, religion has in its bosom the light and the stimulus that are necessary to bring men to the use of this mortal life. It is not itself a substitute for daily duties. It is that which teaches us how to perform those duties. It is the stimulus by which we are moved to a performance of them. It is like a chart: it shows where we are to sail. It is like a map: it describes the country, but does not cultivate it. It is like a scientific treatise on grain and fruit: it does not contain crops, but gives directions for raising them. A book on farming has in it instruction by which men, going out of the book into the field, develop fruit and grain. And the Word of God is a book of directions which stimulates us to develop out of practical life a daily religious experience. For there is no religion except in the vital powers of men in a state of activity. Religion is something that is in the living souls of living men, and not something that is outside of men, and that descends upon them.

The world being a training school, men are held to it. It is right that men should live, and that they should wish to live, since the world is a school where God is preparing them for a higher condition. The instinct of life, without a thought, is very strong in the race at large. Man's spontaneous self-defense is a sort of psychologic record of the early stages through which the race has passed.

This desire of living differs in different individuals and races. Among certain portions of the Chinese, it would seem as though the desire of life was almost unfelt. They accept death with the same equanimity with which we would accept a bath, or any slight variation of our daily duty. We can scarcely understand a race that is so apathetic, and in whom the instinct of life is so feeble, that it scarcely acts at all. But, in general, the instinct of life is so strong that it overacts, and men are more afraid of dying than of dishonor. To save life, men sacrifice whatever is noble in manhood, thus showing the overaction of this instinct.

To the instinct of living are added the chords that bind men to life, derived from the affections, and the relations which the affections sustain in this world. When men are standing in groups, as parents and children, or brothers and sisters, or companions, or partners in life, it is not strange that over and above the instinct of life, which has no thoughtfulness, there should be a strong desire to live for the sake of love, and all the relations which have been brooded by love.

Then, the pursuits of life add farther stimulus to continuance here. For, when men are roused up by ambition, and are interested in the procuring of property, they experience a pleasurable excitement in their vocations. The pursuits of the chase and of angling are known to be very exciting; and of the same kind, only enlarged and more variously rich, are the pursuits of ambition for power and for wealth, and for all those elements that go with wealth and power. When men are actively engaged in life, they want to live, frequently, not because they are afraid to die, not because there is not something very good beyond, but because they have so identified themselves with stimulating and rewarding pursuits, that they desire to carry them on, and carry them out. These things were added to the original instinct, to bind men to this life.

Then, there are the attainments which we reach. When men have surrounded themselves, by good and honest labor of their own, with competence, with things pleasant to the senses and to the soul; when they have the testimony of their conscience that they are wisely employing all the bounties of divine providence which they

have been instrumental in procuring ; when they are conscious that they are administering them nobly and generously ; that they are protectors of the weak ; that they are eyes to the blind ; that they are a right-hand of power to those that have no defenders ; that their thought-power, and motive-power, and wealth, are used for promoting the happiness of their fellow-men—then it is right and proper that they should stand with pride in the midst of their resources, and be glad of God's goodness to them, and wish to continue still to live in the land which the Lord has given them.

So there was no need of promulgating a law against taking one's life. That is not the besetting sin of the world. It is provided for by an instinct which overacts rather than underacts. It usually makes men cowards in moral things. They are bound to this life by their attainments, by their pursuits, and by their affections, as well as by the instinct of life.

Nor was the life to come so disclosed to men as to put this life to shame. Aside from other reasons why the great future is obscured from us, there seems to be the idea that a clear disclosure of a life higher than this, would tend to defeat that education for which this life was instituted. The revelation of the next life might have set up a contrast, to the shame of this life. The life to come might have been made to appear so desirable that no man would long to stay. If heaven were represented to men as so sure, so ample, and so visible that the world itself seemed like a mere shadow ; if the other side were made so bright that this side stood in a perpetual twilight, men would be left without courage to discharge those duties on which their development depends. As passengers on a voyage merely while away the time, without studying or applying any department of knowledge, neither building nor reaping, but only waiting to get to their destination, with the joyful prospect of standing once again on a firm foundation ; so it would be with men in this world, if they had such a sense of the other life as to take no interest in this. They would say, "The best thing a man can do is to wait," and would make no exertion to profit by their circumstances and relations here, relying upon the hope and expectation of being exalted and ennobled yonder.

Hence the notable wisdom of Scripture, which so discloses the life to come as that it shall in the first place inspire activity in goodness on earth. It was not left carelessly. It was not in vain, I take it, that the method of divine teaching was such as it was. It had a distinct relation to the end of things. Experience teaches us that the revelation of the life which is to come has inspired men with intense enterprise, intense activity, and that they have been

willing, for the sake of that which they dimly descried, but did not fully understand, to bear, to forbear, and to go through all the disgrace and endure all the trials that were necessary for the bringing out of a perfect manhood in this world.

The wisdom of Scripture in its mode of disclosing the life to come is seen, too, in this : that it gives courage under difficulties and dangers. For, though we may not know what is the sum of all the joys which are involved in living beyond the grave, though we may not enter into all the particulars, though certainly the familiar flow of events there is not given to us, yet we have a vague, indistinct, but perhaps none the less stimulating sense that the other life is a remuneration for this ; that it fills up the deficiencies of this ; that it cleanses away the imperfections of this. It gives just enough hope to inspire courage, and make men patient under difficulties and dangers. If they are valiant here, and if they endure to the end, they shall be pillars in the temple of God.

While, on the one hand, revelation is not so clear as to make men ashamed, or take away from them the taste and relish of things here present, it is clear enough, and stimulating enough, to make men courageous under dangers and difficulties in this life. If it had not been for the hope of heaven, thousands, tens of thousands, myriads of long-suffering heroes, of whom the world is not worthy, would not have had their names recorded, and would not have been the heroes that they were.

So, too, the wisdom of Scripture, in its mode of teaching the other life, is shown in that it spiritualizes earthly enjoyments. For we are taught that that life and this have necessary and inseparable connections ; that, in some way, cause and effect have their operation respecting both ; and that what we sow we shall reap. If, therefore, we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. The revelation of the other life tends to spiritualize every one of the enjoyments of this life. The flesh tends toward the animal—toward brutality. We are perpetually thrown down toward sensuousness. It is well that we have a great heaven over us, filled with symbols, and not with realities, to our eye—with interpretations and prophecies that are full of vague yet intense stimulus, tending to draw us away from the senses, and to make our joys purer and higher, as well as brighter and better.

It is so revealed, too, that it repairs the losses and rounds out the imperfections of this life. To a reflective mind, there is nothing sadder than the endless mistakes that seem to be part and parcel of human necessity. There are thousands, myriads, who stand in life

with a very small capital ; and that is wasted rather than increased. In the majority of cases, one talent remains one talent. Now and then five talents produce five others ; or ten talents produce ten others ; but taking the race throughout, how exceedingly imperfect it is ! Where there is one good horse that dies and makes his loss felt, a hundred men die without being missed in any way whatever. The noblest thing that ever was put upon the earth is the human soul in the body ; and the cheapest thing that was ever put upon the earth is that same soul. The superfluity of time is mankind. Millions of men die every single year, and do not leave a thought behind them for which the world is any better. Millions of men die who have never made one invention ; who have never improved a road ; who have never enhanced the value of a utensil in the house ; who have never polished the ways of life ; who have never added one incitement to virtue ; who have never been more than the moth-miller ; who have simply been born, cried through their childhood, and eaten and gnawed as the mice or worms eat and gnaw. They were filled full ; they rounded out their life ; they died, and went back to dust. And if you ask in an hour, in a day, in a week, in a month, in a year, what is lost—nothing ! They are not missed from their place. Nay, more pitiful than all, their place was waited for. And when, at last, they are shuffled out, another steps in, and is better off for their going.

To look upon this, going on in the East, in the West, in the North, in the South, and upon all continents and islands ; to see races and generations of men, with all their imperfections and weaknesses, dropping out of this sphere of existence, and sinking into forgetfulness,—cannot but fill with profound ponderings the mind of every reflective man who reads the queries, whether God is the God of the Jews only, or whether he is the God of the Gentiles also ; or when he hears the question discussed, whether heathen nations are objects of God's mercy or not.

But when we bring the matter nearer home, and look at our own lives, our minds are still exercised in much the same way. Consider how small a part of our life is redeemed from mere fleshly existence. Consider how large a part of human life is spent in sleep. During one-third of a man's life he is shoved back into the shop for repairs—for night is but a repair shop. Eight hours is the average daily amount of sleep. There are twenty-four hours in a day, and one-third of that period is used up in black nothingness, only getting materials together for the other two-thirds. And if you take out of the remainder all the time that is required for eating, and the various pauses and intervals that occur during the day, it may, I

think, be said that full one-half of a man's life is waste, and is made so by the economy in which we are born, and by the necessities of the condition in which we are placed.

If, then, you take into account the fact that, so far as the uses of life are concerned, men are born without knowledge, born inexperienced, born with poor teachers, born, some in the far frigid north, some in neighborhoods where there is but little culture, some where they are surrounded by honest, virtuous, true men, some in one place and some in another, without their choice, and in endlessly varied circumstances, and with such a lack of information that they have to make long circuits to do things which, if they were instructed, could be done by them in a moment ; if you consider how many things miscarry ; if you bear in mind how much of the best part of life is squandered, you cannot but be filled with sadness and mourning. And if it were not that, after all, it is not what a man eats, nor what he drinks, nor what he wears, nor what he builds, nor what he leaves behind him at death, but what he carries with him beyond the grave,—if it were not that this tells the story ; if it were not true that the kingdom of heaven is within a man, and that what he is determines his worth in the life to come, the contemplation of this subject would be unendurable. There is many a boor, who, according to his circumstances and ability, is patient, honest, and self-sacrificing, and who is endeavoring to build up and strengthen the elements of an inward manhood, that lie undischarged in the body, but are there, and only want the right conditions to develop them. In the month of March, ten million million things lie beneath the ground, ready, and listening for the piping wind to give them release from their frozen state, that they may break out from the seed, bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit. And so, methinks, all the world around, where the Christian leaven has found its way, there are men who, by the great diffused providence of God, are taught self-denial, and faith, and hope, and patience, and kindness for others, and reverence for God ; and though these things amount to very little as compared with higher developments, they are sufficient for germs ; and they lie in the bud waiting for the influences that are to bring them forth.

It is my hope that the other life, which stands over against and above this, is to be a life in which men will find that their losses were no losses, that their imperfections were only relative to time, and that, according to their circumstances, placed where they were, they were all the while carrying up within themselves the elements of God. But to those to whom this life is all ; to those who do not regard the other life as a compensation for this, or as its

complement; to those who do not understand that things which have their feeble beginnings here are carried out to their endings there—to such the mistakes of this life seem fatal. It is a comfort to believe that our mistakes in this world will have rectification in the world to come—as they will. Our successes are not so profitable to us as our mistakes; for successes generally promote pride and vanity, while mistakes promote humility. Mistakes make a man look back and see what he has been, what he has done, and what he has missed, and why he missed it. Mistakes are full of thought. The best things of our experience have come from the mistakes of life. Mistakes hatch wisdom. Successes hatch pride and vanity. All the inequalities of life, all its burdens, all the things which make men sigh, will, let us hope, be made right hereafter. Do you say, “The mysterious providence of God—I do not understand it?” What you understand not now, you shall understand by and by. The other life stands over against this, to catch it, and mold it, and supply what it lacks.

If these views are true, then I may say to all who are happy in this life, that their happiness should be to them a prophesy or revelation of the happiness they are to enjoy in the other life. There is no perfect joy, no joy worth speaking of, in this world. The joys that we have here are better than nothing; they are sufficient for the hour; but, after all, every noble nature feels that the sweet sounds of this life are but far-away, faint notes of the song that will be infinitely sweeter in the life which is to come. All heart-gladness here is a feeble attempt of nature to prophesy the gladness that rolls in choral grandeur above our heads in the sphere beyond. Happiness in this world ought not to root or anchor us here, to satisfy us here, or teach us to build our foundations here. We have here no continuing city. We seek one to come. By joy, by sorrow, by hope, by patient endurance, by looking up, by looking down, by all means, we are seeking “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

These views come also to those who suffer affliction—and how many there are! If the roll were called, and if we could muster on some great plain all those who are sufferers; if we could draw out from their hidden recesses in society those who are endeavoring to hide their woes, what a strange army of men would be gathered! Those who are in bodily affliction; those who suffer in mind; those who are diseased in ten thousand ways in human life,—if all these should be gathered together, how few would be left behind! How vast would be the multitude!

Now, the Word of God declares that blood is the symbol of

perfectness ; that by suffering we grow toward perfection ; and that when Christ shed his blood for the remission of sins, he set forth, in glorious symbolism, the truth that the whole creation works upward largely by the attrition of suffering. Blood and death are not coarse and brutal things : they are symbols of a universal necessity. The whole creation groans and travails in pain until now, hoping for redemption. It is the travail of hope—not alone of sorrow. They who suffer without a heaven over their head, sodden, sagging down in despondency and despair—they are to be pitied. Suffering that has nothing except what is within the horizon ; suffering that interprets nothing ; suffering that inspires no faith, no yearning ; suffering that demands no medicine from the heavenly land,—that is suffering which kills ; and the sorrow which accompanies such suffering is ungodly and worldly. There is nothing so hardening as unspiritualized suffering ; and there is nothing that is better for the soul, or more enriching, than suffering that drives a man away from earth, away from the conditions of this life as permanent conditions, away from relations that satisfy in this world, and compels him to look up to a larger manhood, to a more perfect fatherhood, and to the blessedness of that city which shall abide forever.

These thoughts come home to all who have faith in the external conditions of life ; who do not think much about success ; who are shiftless and useless, and yet often not in fault. Some men are born without nervous stamina, without the elements which prepare them for the conflicts of life ; and they are whirled about and trampled upon by the strong. They are carried in eddies hither and thither. How many go along successfully a certain way in life, only to see their success overthrown ! How many are prosperous until they are thirty, forty, fifty years of age, and then break down, their period having been run through, by their social connection with others, by some great convulsion, or by the working out of some vicious elements that were incorporated into their plan ! They break down never to get on their feet again ; and all the rest of their earthly existence is filled up with mere expedients to supply life from day to day. What miserable lives are theirs, if this life is all there is ! But how different if men feel, “I was born into this world that I might prepare for the world that is to come, and I cheerfully go away from the success that I had almost reached, from wealth that seemed to be well-nigh in my possession, from enjoyments that were about to surround me. I have failed in the outward, but I have a city in which is no failure. I am a man, though I am not a

strong man. I have reason, and conscience, and hope, and trust. To my call come no flocks; I have no trumpet; my sword is broken in my hand; but I am a man, and God knows it, and I wait. My life lost? No; I am waiting to inherit my life. I have no abiding city here, but I am seeking one to come."

How blessed is the bankruptcy which stores the soul with such treasure! It is better for a man to live on faith and hope, to live on a contented trust in God, to live on a belief in the revelation of his true life in the world to come, than to be a merchant prince, with everything that the senses can want. Who are the successful men in life? Now and then there is a man that is successful both inside and outside. Now and then there is a man of great probity, of great generosity, of great goodness of inward nature, who yet is clothed with such physical and outward power that he is able to control the forces of outward greatness, and he stands eminent among his fellow-men; and everybody rejoices in him, because he has succeeded outwardly and inwardly too.

Underneath these, who are the elect, and of whom I am afraid there are not a great many in life, stand the two conspicuous divisions of men—those who succeed by the inside, and those who succeed by the outside.

Go into the great mart, where the cry of Mammon is, and look at those who are crowned with golden-leaved laurel; are they men in whose shoes you would stand, for all their money? Would you be cold of heart; would you be hard-hearted; would you be selfish to the last degree; would you be indifferent to your word and honor; would you live simply to heap store on store, ship on ship, house on house, lands on lands, funds on funds, for the sake of all the money that the globe could hold? There are such successful men. How many there are in New York whose foot-tread would shake the street! How many there are in that great city who have gathered together that which makes fools envy them, and whose living and dying affect the markets of the globe! How many men there are whose souls, if you were to look for them one moment after they had gone through the narrow gate, at which every man leaves everything physical behind him, you could not see on the other side,—so small, so poor, are they inwardly! A long life, and every virtue shrunk! A long life, with no goodness! A long life, with no generosity! A long life, with no honor! A long life, with no aspiration, no love of God, and no love to man, unless it be a various, overswollen love of self! How many there are whose life has been spent in weaving silk, cocoon-like, about their own selves! They lie down,

wound in that which came from their own bowels, and are worms inside.

On the other hand, how many are shifting houses from year to year, because they cannot pay so much rent! How many are going down step by step, and cannot bear the proud eyes of old associates! How many are selling what they have, little by little! How many tears are shed over the instrument of music which the child has so often fingered! How many sighs are uttered by the sweetest and noblest of mothers, who says, as it goes, "God bless the piano! May somebody's child have it that shall love it: it was my daughter's!" How many sadly unclasp from the wrist the memorials and gifts of love! How many reluctantly take the cherished ring from the hand! How many sit down, with nothing left, and wait? And how many persons pity them! And how pitiful they are, if they have nothing beyond and above this world! But if all these things work patience, and sweet content, and faith in God, and a certainty that the other life is the true life, and if men say, as their worldly treasures pass from them, "We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come," how blessed, how rich they are! Herein we see the truth of Christ's words, "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last."

To all who find their days declining; to all upon whom age is creeping, with its infirmities; to all whose strength seems steadily to ebb; to all whose senses are failing; to all whose sight is going, and whose hearing is dull and heavy; to all, in other words, who find that their most precious gifts are being taken away from them, these views also come. God seems to take our last things, and, as it were, pack them up for our journey. And let every one, instead of mourning the white hair, the dim eye and the enfeebled hand, look at them in the light of prophecy. You have no continuing city here. These are tokens that you are approaching land. They are signs that the troubles of the sea are almost over.

After a weary voyage of twenty-one days on the *New World*, I awaked one morning, and descried afar off a blue, faint line on the horizon, and snuffed in the air a strange odor; and I said to Captain Knight—a grand and glorious fellow—"What is that?" "It is the land," said he. My tears overflowed. It was almost like being born again. The ocean was behind me; the land was close by; and the sweetest smell I ever smelled on earth was the ground smell that came up from old Ireland to me, as we drew near to the other side.

Blessed are they that know how to discern the signs and tokens

of their approach to the heavenly land ! These elements of decay are evidences that you are crossing the deep. The things that you will need are being folded up and laid away. You have here no farther use for them. It cannot be long, with your infirmities, before you will rise to a nobler possession. There stands He who is our Forerunner—Jesus the Mediator—the elder Brother.

Now listen to the glorious words which precede the text, in the chapter foregoing :

“Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

Turn once more to that other triumphant language of inspiration :

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

To that blessed land, by this tempestuous voyage, we are all drawing near. Some soon will be there ; sooner or later, all. By the grace of God, by the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, by hope and by trust, take hold of the blessedness of that life in such a way as that it shall bring down sweetness, and strength, and courage, and support to you in the toil, and the sins, and the besetments of this mortal life. And that we may do this, let us renew our courage, not only, but our love and our pledged fidelities to Him who is our life, and who will, when he appears, bring us with him—our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins, and ascended into heaven, to bring us to his Father’s house, where there are many mansions prepared for us.

So many as are present, and desire, this morning, to unite with us in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper ; so many as desire to do it because they are conscious of their need of God’s help by reason of their weakness and their transgressions ; so many as are willing to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, his love, his commands and his duties as the law of their life, and are willing to pledge fealty to him—all such I invite to tarry for a few moments, while we observe this Last Supper of our Lord.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

OUR heavenly Father, we draw near to thee, knowing how much better thou art than the best among men; how much nobler as a parent; how much truer as a friend. Thou art unspeakably truer than the most true among men. Thou art infinite in all excellence. Not alone in thy wisdom, nor chiefly in thy wisdom, though this is supereminent over all thy works, do we behold thy greatness. We discern in the infinitude of thy mercy and thy goodness the depths and resources of thy nature. Where it will end, we know not. When the unfolding series and the long history will draw near to their completeness, we cannot understand. We are far from thee. We are coming near to thee, little by little. We belong to a race that is approaching thee. But where the end shall be, how far distant that future is when all the earth shall see thy salvation, we know not. Blessed be thy name that thou hast established a government, a providence, over men; that thou dost hear their cry; that thou art mindful of their needs; that thy heart is open; that thy thoughts are thoughts of mercy; that thou art boundless in thy kindness to them; yea, that thy very stripes and chastisements are administered in love; that thou dost inflict pain and bring forth joy; that out of darkness comes light; that by suffering thou art preparing a more glorious realm where tears shall be wiped away, and where sorrow and sighing shall flee forever.

We beseech of thee, O Lord our God, to grant that we may have patience. If we cannot discern, give us faith to believe, that thou art carrying forward thy great work over all the earth, and through all time. How poor we are! How feeble is our thought! With what slender grasp do we take hold of things which stretch out infinitely beyond our reach! Grant that we may have faith, not in our reason, not in the sight of what we see, but in the sense of the goodness of God; in the truth that we have thee. There thou standest, the everlasting One, with infinite resources, dwelling in eternity, unhastening; and bringeth forth, by degrees, through the ages, that consummation for which the whole creation has been groaning and travailing in pain until now.

We thank thee that thou art bringing so many to a personal knowledge of thee, through a sweet experience of faith in Jesus Christ. We thank thee for the blessedness of a knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. We thank thee for the opening of thine inward nature. We thank thee for that interpretation of thee which is vouchsafed to us through Christ. And we pray that we may not be afraid to put our trust in Him. May we not be afraid that thou wilt be jealous of the worship which is bestowed upon thy Son. Grant that he who thought it not robbery to be equal with God may receive honor, and glory, and thanksgiving; but, above all, may he receive love, which is the source of all praise, and honor, and glory, and thanksgiving; and may we rest in him.

Be thou, we beseech of thee, as an ark to us. May we fly unto thee from the overwhelming flood, and find ourselves upborne by thy strength; and in thy life may our lives be refreshed and renewed day by day.

Grant, we pray thee, thy blessing to rest upon thy dear servants who have been gathered, this morning, into the communion of this church, and into its fellowship. May they walk in the spirit of the Master. May they be living branches of a living vine, bringing forth much fruit.

Remember every one that belongs to this church. How many there are that are scattered from us! Some are in distant lands, wandering on errands of thy providence. Some are upon the sea. Some are in the wilderness.

* Immediately following the reception of members into the church.

Grant, wherever they may be, wide apart, that they may be near thee, and that thus through thee they may be near to each other.

If any are sick, wilt thou be gracious to them, and let the light of thy countenance cheer their darkness, and thy power strengthen their weakness, and thy love be as medicine for their souls.

Be near to any who are in trouble, and are bearing burdens. We pray, O Lord our God, that thou wilt sustain them in their trials, and bring them out into a large place, and establish their goings.

We beseech of thee that thy blessing may rest upon those who are enduring and suffering in behalf of the children that thou hast given them. May they be able so to trust thee that the work of rearing those children shall be a work of joy. And even if they find the toil and labor which thou hast granted them to be a task that demands wisdom and long patience, may they not be discouraged. How long hast thou borne with them! With what wisdom and patience hast thou taught them! And may they never despair, but bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And if those children, in later life, seem to depart from their instructions, may they still have faith, and by prayer hold to thy promises, and to their own hopes that God, peradventure, will bring back, even in the last hours, their lost ones.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt send thy blessing out into all the households that are connected with this congregation. We pray that every one of the families may have the light of thy presence. We beseech of thee that prayer may be heard in every household. May those that are walking in the sweet companionship of a higher life not fail, from day to day, to give light and joy to their affection by the invoked praise of their God and Saviour.

We pray for thy servants that, according to their strength and wisdom, are endeavoring to fulfill their duties. May they have more and more of that tenderness which was in Jesus Christ. May they have that earnestness and fidelity which are required by their high calling.

Grant, we pray thee, that those who preach the Gospel may preach it in sincerity and in truth. We pray that thou wilt teach men better and better how to preach; how to find the hearts of men; how to set in order the words of thy truth, so that men may discern the reasonableness of that to which they are called, and so that multitudes may enter the way of life.

We pray for the whole world, which thou hast promised shall be redeemed. Let the changes which are to take place follow each other speedily. Overturn and overturn till He whose right it is shall reign, when light shall come, and darkness shall flee; when joy shall appear, and sorrow shall depart; when true religion shall crowd out superstition; and when the whole earth shall be filled with thy salvation.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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